

## **Key Facts about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program)**

### **SNAP Participant Characteristics:**

Nationally, the SNAP participation rate among all eligible persons was 67 percent (Leftin, 2010) in fiscal year 2008. The participation rate for eligible working poor individuals was significantly lower (in a statistical sense) at 54 percent.

*Source & for more info:* <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/Reaching2008Summary.pdf>

**Most SNAP recipients were children or elderly.** Nearly half (48 percent) were children and another 8 percent were age 60 or older. Working-age women represented 28 percent of the caseload, while working-age men represented 16 percent.

**Many SNAP recipients had jobs.** More than 29 percent of SNAP households had earnings in 2009, and 40 percent of all SNAP participants lived in a household with earnings. For these households, earnings were the primary source of income.

**The majority of SNAP households did not receive cash welfare benefits.** Less than 10 percent of all SNAP households received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits and another 5 percent received State General Assistance (GA) benefits. About 24 percent of SNAP households received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits and over 22 percent received Social Security.

**SNAP households had little income.** Only 14 percent had income above the poverty line, while more than 41 percent had incomes at, or below, half the poverty line. Nearly 18 percent had no cash income of any kind. The typical SNAP household had gross income of \$711 per month. More than 27 percent of monthly funds (gross income plus SNAP benefits) available to a typical household came from SNAP.

**The average SNAP household received a monthly benefit of \$272.** More than 37 percent received the maximum benefit for their family size – \$588 for a family of four during the first half of the year and \$668 after the implementation of ARRA. Just over 4 percent received the minimum benefit available to households with one or two members in 2009. The minimum benefit was \$14 during the first half of the year and increased to \$16 with ARRA. Most households (81 percent) receiving the minimum benefit contained elderly or disabled members and were likely to receive Supplemental Security Income or Social Security.

**SNAP households had few resources.** The average SNAP household possessed only about \$101 in countable resources (including the nonexcluded portion of vehicles and the entire value of checking and savings accounts and other savings). A majority of SNAP households (78 percent) had no countable resources. However, it should be noted that many (66 percent) SNAP households were categorically eligible and thus neither subject to the asset test nor required to provide information about their assets.

**Most SNAP households were small.** The average SNAP household size was 2.2 persons, but varied considerably by household composition. Households with children were larger, averaging 3.3 members. Households with elderly participants were smaller, with an average of 1.3 members.

**The primary source of income among SNAP participants shifted from welfare to work.** In 1989, 42 percent of all SNAP households received cash welfare benefits and only 20 percent had earnings. In 2009, less than 10 percent received cash welfare, while 29 percent had earnings.

*Source & for more info:* <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/2009CharacteristicsSummary.pdf>

### **SNAP Error Rates:**

The FY 2010 national payment error rate of 3.81 percent represents the lowest rate in the history of the program. The national payment error rate includes underpayments and overpayments, of which intentional program violations are a small part.

*Source and for more info:* <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/qc/pdfs/2010-rates.pdf>

### **SNAP Trafficking:**

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) aggressively acts to control trafficking by using SNAP purchase data to identify suspicious transaction patterns, conducting undercover investigations, and collaborating with other investigative agencies. Based on the most comprehensive current estimate, trafficking diverted an estimated \$330 million annually from SNAP benefits – or about one cent of each SNAP dollar – between 2006 and 2008. About 8.2 percent of all stores trafficked.

*Source & for more info:* <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/snap/FILES/ProgramIntegrity/Trafficking2006Summary.pdf>